

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 10, 2017

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The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I appreciate you taking the time to meet with me in advance of Senate consideration of your nomination and share your goal of establishing open communication between our offices. As you begin your work as Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), I wanted to take this opportunity to convey some of the concerns that I hear from Connecticut farmers, consumers, and residents. I encourage you to consider these comments and requests, and I hope that you will join me in Connecticut in the future to visit some of our thriving small farms.

When I talk to people in Connecticut, they tell me time and time again that they want clear, easy to understand, on-package information about what is in their food and how it is made. Responding to these growing concerns from consumers, Connecticut was the first state in the country to pass a GMO-labeling law. However, last year, Congress passed a law that undercuts a state's ability to pass strong GMO labeling laws and leaves room for companies to conceal information from consumers with QR codes, 1-800 numbers, and websites. The law also delegates the responsibility of making important decisions on labeling requirements to the USDA. I strongly urge you to take the concerns of Connecticut constituents into account when finalizing these regulations and give consumers across the country what they are demanding—clear, easy to read, on package information about GMO ingredients.

Beyond the development of regulations on GMO labeling, the USDA plays an integral role in supporting organic farms and organic food programs. Consumer demand for organic food continues to grow: in 2015, there were \$4.2 billion in organic food sales, the largest dollar gain ever recorded.¹ The USDA's organic regulations are an important tool in standardizing accepted practices for farmers and providing consumers the assurance that the food they purchase is grown without synthetic fertilizers or GMOs and uses farming methods that conserves biodiversity, wetlands, and wildlife habitats. I urge you to continue USDA's work to support organic farmers and enforce strong standards for USDA certified organic farms.

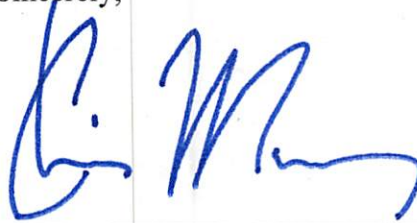
Given the importance of strong organic programs to Connecticut consumers and farmers, I have advocated through the congressional appropriations process for more funding for organic research in order to equip all farmers with better tools to farm sustainably. For example, all

¹ "U.S. organic sales post new record of \$43.3 billion in 2015." Organic Trade Association. N.p., 19 May 2016.
<<https://www.ota.com/news/press-releases/19031>>

farmers can potentially benefit from research on organic practices like using crop rotations to break pest cycles or non-herbicide methods of weed control. I hope to partner with you in this work and urge you to support robust funding levels for all organic programs at USDA. In particular, I respectfully ask that you allow the finalized organic livestock and poultry regulations to go into effect without further delay.

Thank you for considering these concerns, and I look forward to working with you in your new role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. S. Murphy", written over a horizontal line.

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator